# Pacific Islands Fishery News

Newsletter of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council

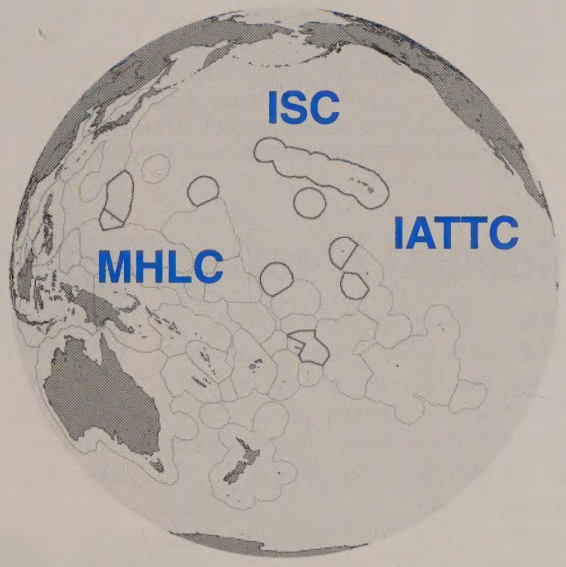
Summer 1998

## Multilateral Process to Manage Tuna Moves Forward

For tuna and other highly migratory species, the Pacific Ocean may have no boundaries. But, for fisheries research and management, the Pacific is being carved into three domains, each guided by an international organization—the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) in the eastern Pacific, the Interim Scientific Committee (ISC) for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific and, slated for June 2000, a management body in the central and western Pacific being developed by the Multilateral High Level Conference (MHLC) on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (figure 1).

Strategically located at the hub of the three areas is the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council in Honolulu. The only U.S. Fishery Management Council with a Fishery Management Plan for highly migratory species, the Council closely monitors the activities of each organization and is an active observer in the emerging MHLC, which includes fishing zones in the Council's jurisdiction.

MHLC has its impetus in Article 64 of the Third United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which calls for international cooperation in the management of tunas and billfishes. The MHLC process was enhanced by the UN Implementing Agreement (UNIA) on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, which provides guidance on the key concept of the "precautionary approach" to the conservation and management of fisheries resources; defines how coastal states and distant water fishing nations (DWFNs) are to cooperate in the conservation and management of tuna and other fish stocks; and requires regional fisheries entities to develop management strategies along with enforcement and monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) systems to ensure compliance with fisheries regulations for highly migratory species.




**The Pacific Ocean's three fisheries research and management domains—the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), the Interim Scientific Committee (ISC) and the emerging body being developed by the Multilateral High Level Conference (MHLC). At the hub of the three are the Hawaiian Islands, headquarters of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, which has jurisdiction over the fishing zones outlined in blue.**

The first MHLC on South Pacific Tuna Fisheries (MHLC1) was convened in Honiara, Solomon Islands, Dec. 5–9, 1994. Its focus was technical and included the status of tuna stocks in the western and central Pacific, the collection and exchange of catch data, transshipment, enforcement issues including vessel monitoring systems (VMS) and other issues related to commercial fishing operations.

At the behest of MHLC1, technical consultations on VMS were held

*Continued on page 6*

### In This Issue

Multilateral Process to Manage Tuna ..... 1
Council Meeting Highlights ..... 2
Seabird Mortality ..... 3
Pacific Island Gamefish Tournaments ..... 3
Changing Roles for SPC and FFA? ..... 4
Coral Reef Management ..... 4
A Swordfish is Not a Swordfish ..... 5
Council Member Profiles ..... 5
Council Calendar ..... 5
Western Pacific Recipe ..... 6

**The Honorable Tauese P. Sunia, Governor of American Samoa (standing) opened the 95th Council Meeting at the Fono (Legislature) Guest House. He is flanked by Council Chair Jim Cook and Council Executive Director Kitty Simonds.**

# Council Meeting Highlights

Closed areas for the American Samoa pelagics fishery were discussed and harvest limits for the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) lobster fishery were adopted at the 95th and 96th Council Meetings held April 14–16 in Pago Pago and May 8 in Honolulu.

Area closures in American Samoa would prohibit the taking of tuna, billfish and other pelagic fish by domestic and foreign fishing vessels longer than 50 feet from waters within 100 miles of the territory's islands. Exempt from the closure would be longline vessels greater than 50 feet that received permits to fish within the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) around American Samoa and landed pelagic species prior to Nov. 14, 1997. The closures are being considered because owner/operators of the local albacore longline fleet fear that larger U.S. vessels would interact negatively with their fishing operations.

**Council Meeting participants examine a purse-seine net at Pago Pago harbor.**

In accordance with the Crustacean Fisheries Management Plan, the Council has adopted the 1998 NWHI lobster harvest limit of 286,000 lobsters. The limit will be distributed among four fishing areas: Maro Reef 80,000; Necker Islands 70,000; Gardner Pinnacles 20,000; and other banks/areas 116,000. The Council also requested that options be developed to establish an annual process whereby the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) regional Administrator is authorized, in consultation with the Council, to allocate the annual NWHI lobster harvest guideline among banks or areas. Lobster fishermen have indicated that about 90 percent of this season's lobster landing is targeted for the live market whereas in 1997 the fishery was primarily frozen tails with only about 10 percent landed alive.

Other recommendations endorsed by the Council concerned essential fish habitat, overfishing, bycatch, fishing sectors and fishing communities. The Council also directed staff to finalize the list of Coral Reef Ecosystem Plan Team Members, limiting membership to 12 individuals.

Other actions and discussions taken by the Council included

- a request to develop an amendment to ensure that shark finning data is collected from all fisheries operating in the U.S. EEZ around the U.S. Pacific island possessions
- a recommendation to finalize the amendment establishing a limited access system for the Mau Zone bottom fishery in the NWHI
- an endorsement of ongoing State of Hawaii and NMFS research to determine stock boundaries of onaga and ehu in the Hawaiian archipelago

## Seabird Mortality Investigation and Workshop

Recognizing the problem of seabird mortality associated with the longline fishery, the Council has instigated a two-year investigation on techniques to reduce bird interaction by Hawaii pelagic longliners. The Council is also co-sponsoring, along with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), an international workshop on the black-footed albatross (*Diomedea nigripes*) population in the North Pacific.

The seabird interaction investigation began in March 1998, with a final report due in February 2000. Garcia & Associates has been contracted by the Council to observe the response of birds to mitigation techniques that have been proposed or are already in use by the Hawaii pelagic longline fishery.

The investigators will conduct experiments with the cooperation of commercial vessels operating in the areas where fishing activities are most prone to bird interactions. A combination of experimental techniques and gear modifications will be tested, such as bird lines and poles, towing buoys and bags, spraying water, bait dyeing, bait thawing and greater weight on hooks. The results will be analyzed along with other factors, such as time of day and light level during set and haul, vessel speed and position relative to lines and location of fishing activity.

The project will include at least five fishing trips of three-week plus duration each. Data collected by the NMFS observer program for the Hawaii pelagic longline fishery will also be available for evaluation.

The international bird mortality workshop is a nine-month project, which began in April 1998. A workshop coordinator hired by the Council is responsible for assembling data, developing a bird banding database and coordinating the efforts of population modelers and statisticians invited to discuss the effects of the Hawaii pelagic longline fishery on the black-footed albatross population in the North Pacific. Data from breeding colonies and mortality estimates from observer programs will be used to assess impacts on the population. Large volumes of bird banding data have been provided by the U.S. FWS bird banding laboratory in Maryland, the Smithsonian Institute and individual avian population biologists. Indeed, the sheer volume of the data available following decades of bird banding means that considerable effort will be required to incorporate and check all of this information prior to the workshop! Results from a modeling exercise and recommendation from workshop participants will be provided to wildlife and fishery managers and be published by the Council. For more information, contact Paul Dalzell (808) 522-6042 or e-mail paul.dalzell@noaa.gov.

## Symposium on Pacific Island Gamefish Tournaments

The most prestigious billfish tournament in the world—the Hawaiian International Billfish Tournament in Kailua-Kona, Hawaii—celebrates its 40th anniversary this year. As part of the festivities, the Hawaiian International Billfish Association and the Pacific Ocean Research Foundation, along with the Council, NOAA, the State of Hawaii and other private and public organizations, are sponsoring a pre-tournament Symposium on Pacific Island Gamefish Tournaments, July 29 to Aug. 1.

Anglers, scientists, resource managers, tournament organizers and others from throughout the central and western Pacific are expected to participate in this first-of-a-kind event, which is to focus on the human as well as the biological aspects of gamefish tournaments. Resource conservation, sustainable development and the sportfishing ethic as it pertains to Pacific island gamefishing and tournaments will be considered.

Recreational gamefish fisheries and tournaments are already established in American Samoa, Australia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Hawaii, New Caledonia and New Zealand, and interest in these activities has been shown in Palau, Cook Islands, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu.

For more information, contact Paul Dalzell at (808) 522-6042 or e-mail paul.dalzell@noaa.gov or Mike Nelson at (808) 329-6105 or e-mail billfish@lava.net.

**After being weighed in, one participant's catch of tazard and other fish are displayed for the crowd gathered at a recreational fishing tournament in rural New Caledonia. (photo by Sylvia Spalding)**

# Changing Roles for SPC and FFA?

The Multilateral High Level Conference (MHLC) covers an area that has long been served by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC)—formerly, the South Pacific Commission—and the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA). As the MHLC materializes as the region's scientific and management organization for highly migratory species, the roles of the SPC and FFA are likely to change.

Conceived in the post-war Pacific, the SPC is dedicated to the social and economic development of the region. Originally formed by the region's former colonial powers, it has evolved to include all 22 Pacific Island countries and territories (American Samoa, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Pitcairn Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Wallis and Futuna).

SPC's involvement in national and regional fisheries dates back to its first Regional Technical Meeting on Fisheries in 1952. A major project has been the Tuna and Billfish Assessment Program (TBAP), which maintains a database on industrial tuna fisheries in the region, both as a primary research tool for the scientific assessment and monitoring of the status of tuna and billfish stocks in the SPC area and as a service to member countries. In 1988, the Standing Committee on Tuna and Billfish was established as an advisory body to TBAP and all SPC tuna fisheries research projects were restructured under the Oceanic Fisheries Program (OFP).

The FFA was established by the South Pacific Forum following the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, which allows individual states to claim ownership of marine resources within a 200-mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ). With extended jurisdiction, Pacific island nations became responsible for negotiating access arrangements with foreign fishing nations. Lack of information on catch and landed prices led to the realization of the need for cooperation within the region.

The FFA mandate was directed towards maximizing the benefits from the living resources of the oceans through economic, scientific and legal means. Its member countries include Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Assistance provided by FFA has ranged from draft legislation and access agreements to prosecution coordination procedures. Minimum terms and conditions for fisheries access to the EEZs of member countries was formally entered into force in 1983, and a fisheries treaty with the United States, in 1988.

At the third MHLC to be convened in June this year in Tokyo, there will be discussion on the formation of a Commission for the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean. The roles of both FFA and SPC in relation to this new management organization will also be discussed. The MHLC draft discussion document proposes that, initially, FFA would act as the interim secretariat to the Commission and the SPC's OFP would be the scientific and statistical advisor to this new Commission. The development of the new management Commission in the western and central Pacific could, therefore, have important and far-reaching consequences for the two leading regional fisheries organizations serving the tropical Pacific Islands.

# Coral Reef Ecosystems FMP to be Developed

The 1997 Year of the Reef has left in its wake an abundance of activity in coral reef research and management—locally, regionally and internationally.

Experts convened at a workshop in Honolulu June 9–11 to develop a coral reef monitoring program for Hawaii, which would eventually be a part of a management plan for the state's reefs. One of the workshop goals was to design monitoring protocols that would be compatible or consistent with ongoing initiatives worldwide. Other issues included data management and nongovernmental organization partnerships.

The published workshop proceedings is to be widely disseminated to encourage adoption of the recommendations on coral reef monitoring by a broad audience. For more information, contact the State of Hawaii, Department of Land and Natural Resources, Division of Aquatic Resources, 1151 Punchbowl Street, Room 330, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813, Attention: Francis Oishi; phone (808) 587-0094; or e-mail francis@dar.ccmail.compuserve.com.

Regionally, the Council is working to develop a Coral Reef Ecosystems Fishery Management Plan. This fifth FMP is being developed through the formation of a Plan Team. Last year, the Council was presented with a region-wide assessment of coral reef resources, which concluded that local resource agencies would benefit from improved support to better monitor and manage their near-shore coral reef resources. The assessment also suggested that specialized studies are needed in a few areas where resource impacts have the greatest potential to occur or are beginning to occur.

In the international sphere, the Fisheries Society of the British Isles has selected Tropical Fish Biology as the theme of its annual international symposium. A multidisciplinary approach will be taken to tackle common questions in the areas of fishes and ecosystems, population and conservation genetics, evolution and speciation, behavior, and conservation and resource management. For more information on the July 13–16 symposium to be held at the University of Southampton, UK, contact George Turner at 44-1703-594394, fax 44-1703-594269 or e-mail GFT@soton.ac.uk.

**Coral reef research and management activity is abundant locally, regionally and internationally—and includes Council efforts to develop a Coral Reef Ecosystems FMP. (photo by Sylvia Spalding)**

# A Swordfish is Not a Swordfish is Not a Swordfish

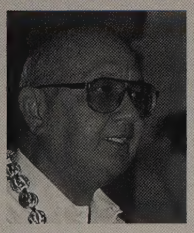
In January, more than two dozen prominent chefs and restaurateurs nationwide announced a campaign to "Give a Swordfish a Break." They pledged to not serve North Atlantic swordfish in 1998, the Year of the Ocean, until adequate conservation measures are taken to restore the North Atlantic species.

Ramifications of the campaign are being felt in Hawaii, where fish dealers, the Council and National Marine Fisheries Service have received queries regarding the size and maturity of swordfish caught in the Pacific. The majority of Pacific swordfish are shipped to the U.S. Mainland, and about half the swordfish consumed on the East Coast is supplied from the Pacific.

**The Council is working to inform the public that the stocks of Pacific swordfish, like the one pictured, are healthy and should not be confused with North Atlantic swordfish stocks.**

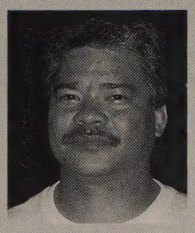
The Council is working to inform the public about the Pacific swordfish and the healthy state of its pelagic stocks. If the difference between North Atlantic and Pacific swordfish is not appreciated, it could bode ill for Pacific fishermen.

## Guam and Northern Mariana Islands Council Members Profiles

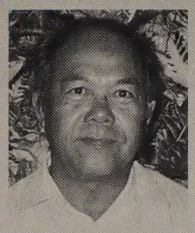


Bordallo

Guthertz



Palacios



Tenario

**Paul Bordallo** is chairman of the Guam Economic Development Authority and a private businessman.

**Judith Guthertz** is a professor and vice president of academic affairs at the University of Guam, a former Guam police chief and an elected member of the Board of Education.

**Arnold Palacios**, a former director of the Northern Mariana Islands Division of Fish and Wildlife, is now retired but will be working on projects with the division.

**Jack Tenario** is secretary of the Northern Mariana Islands Department of Natural Resources.

## COUNCIL CALENDAR

**JUNE**

**22–26** 3rd Multilateral High Level Conference on Management of Western and Central Pacific Ocean Highly Migratory Species
Tokyo, Japan

**JULY**

**13–15** Regional Fishery Management Council Chairmen and Executive Directors Meeting
Maui Prince Hotel
Kihei, Maui, Hawaii

**21–23** 69th Scientific and Statistical Committee Meeting
1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1400
Honolulu, Hawaii

**27–29** 97th Council Meeting
King Kamehameha Hotel
Kailua-Kona, Hawaii

**29–Aug. 1**
Pacific Ocean Research Foundation Symposium on Pacific Island Gamefishing Tournaments
Kona, Hawaii

**AUGUST**

**3–7** 2nd South Pacific Commission Inshore Fisheries Management Workshop
Noumea, New Caledonia

**23–27** 128th Annual Meeting of the American Fisheries Society
Hartford Civic Center and Sheraton Hotel
Hartford, Connecticut

**OCTOBER**

IATTC Tuna/Dolphin Review Panel Meeting [for date and location, e-mail rallen@iattc.ucsd.edu]

**8–10** Bird Mortality Workshop
1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1400
Honolulu, Hawaii

**NOVEMBER**

**3–5** 70th Scientific and Statistical Committee Meeting
1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1400
Honolulu, Hawaii

**16–18** 98th Council Meeting
Ala Moana Hotel
Honolulu, Hawaii

in Honolulu, Sept. 27–29, 1995, and in Nadi, Fiji, Nov. 13–15, 1996. Participants included experts from several member countries of the Forum Fisheries Agency, other Pacific Island countries and territories, regional organizations and DWFNs (Japan, Korea, People's Republic of China, Taiwan and the United States).

Also at the request of MHLC1, a technical consultation on the collection and exchange of fisheries data, tuna research and stock assessment was held at the headquarters of the then South Pacific Commission (SPC)—now the Secretariat of the Pacific Community—in Noumea, New Caledonia, July 15–19, 1996. The consultation provided an opportunity for coastal States and fishing States in the region to jointly discuss scientific and technical issues arising from both UNCLOS and the UNIA, including data requirements for stock assessment; data holdings maintained by SPC, coastal States and DWFNs; minimum requirements for data collection; and review of current arrangements and future possible arrangements for data exchange, tuna research and stock assessment.

MHLC2, held in Majuro, Marshall Islands, June 10–13, 1997, was attended by representatives from Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Japan, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, People's Republic of China, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Solomon Islands, Taiwan, Tonga, Tuvalu, the United States, Vanuatu, Wallis and Futuna and Western Samoa. The conference identified June 2000 as the target date to complete an agreement, with annual MHLC meetings and intersessional technical consultations (ITCs) as required. Participants agreed that, although all highly migratory species listed in annex 1 of the 1982 UNCLOS should be covered by the management arrangement, the initial focus should be on bigeye, skipjack, yellowfin and South Pacific albacore tuna.

Following MHLC2, an ITC on issues relating to fisheries management was convened in Honiara, Solomon Islands, Dec. 1–5, 1997. The consultation agreed that the definition of the area of applications should refer to a broad geographical area, such as "western and central Pacific," with more specific geographical areas identified later to apply to specific stocks, management strategies and measures. It also agreed that effective dialogue and collaboration with adjacent fisheries bodies or research groups, including, but not limited to IATTC, ICS and the Commission for the Conservation of the Southern Bluefin Tuna, should be maintained.

An ITC on MCS was convened in Suva, Fiji, on March 10–13, 1998. It concluded that the lack of agreed maritime boundaries should not impede the development of a regional arrangement and that the arrangement should adopt MCS measures that are compatible with existing MCS measures; provide for the establishment of a multilateral register of all vessels authorized to fish in the region, including those on the high seas and from States that are nonparticipants in the arrangement; include a commitment to establish a regional observer program; and contain detailed requirements for a regional VMS.

At the direction of the ITC on issues relating to fisheries management, a workshop on precautionary limit reference points for highly migratory fish stocks and their relevance to tuna fisheries in the western and central Pacific was convened immediately prior to the eleventh Standing Committee on Tuna and Billfish. The Council hosted the May 28 and 29 workshop in Honolulu. A report on the workshop's outcome is to be presented at MHLC3 to be held in Tokyo, June 22–26, 1998.

**Pacific Islands Fishery News**
is published quarterly by the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, 1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1400, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813. All rights reserved. Unsolicited material will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope.

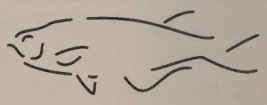
Telephone: (808) 522-8220
Fax: (808) 522-8226

Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council

Chair
James Cook (Hawaii)

Vice Chairs
Judith Guthertz (Guam)
Arnold Palacios (Northern Mariana Islands)
Frank Farm (Hawaii)
Paul R. Stevenson (American Samoa)

Executive Director
Kitty Simonds



## A Western Pacific Regional Recipe

### Fried Spinach-Sashimi Sushi

*From the island of Maui, here's an appetizer that's a great hit at parties and potlucks.*

Ingredients:

- fresh spinach
- nori (sheets of roasted seaweed)
- sashimi-quality tuna
- egg white
- Panko (Japanese-style bread crumbs)
- oil
- wasabi (Japanese horseradish)
- soy sauce

Directions:

Wash the spinach, dry and lay on sheets of nori seaweed. Cut tuna in strips, 8 inches long and ½ inch in diameter. Lay each strip at one end of a spinach-covered nori. Roll the seaweed from the tuna end, and secure its edge by moistening with water. Dip each roll into egg white and then Panko. Fry the rolls in a heated skillet with oil until the outsides are crisp but the sashimi strips inside are still raw in the middle. Slice into ½ inch portions. Serve with a wasabi and soy sauce mixture.